

hetoric II: Writing for Special Purposes

Technical writing or technical communications (because it includes oral skills as well) is writing about any technical topic. The word “technical” refers to any knowledge that is **specific to a particular field or specialty and is not widespread**. As students work towards their major, they are developing an expertise – becoming a specialist in a particular technical area. This course serves to inform students that, whenever they write or say something about that area of expertise, they are engaged in technical communications. Further, it serves to instruct them in how they can effectively communicate that specialist knowledge to a wider audience.

Regardless of their area of interest or expertise, students will have to communicate frequently, often in writing and often technical information. Learning and practicing the basic (and not-so-basic) technical-writing skills covered in this course will mean that they are likely to communicate better and more effectively in any career. The skills learnt in FOUN 1008 can be applied to other academic work and projects, as well as current and prospective careers.

This course targets a specific kind of writing and as such, assumes students possess necessary proficiency with basic language skills of Standard English grammar, syntax and vocabulary. This course will NOT teach students about parts of speech, spelling or grammar.

course

This course is designed to help students recognise, and use effectively, the particular techniques and strategies of technical (business, scientific or professional) writing needed for effective communication in their given disciplines. By the end of the course, they should be able to:

- understand the techniques of information gathering and information presentation appropriate to their field;
- produce high quality, well-written technical literature;
- write with an understanding and appreciation of an intended audience and their needs.

Teaching and Learning Goals

Instructors are expected to work closely and collaboratively with students in a workshop environment to help them achieve the following learning outcomes:

1. Using the resources of observation, conversation, reading and creativity relevantly
2. Using graphics correctly
3. Gathering information from sources other than written texts
4. Documenting sources responsibly and ethically
5. Choosing and using appropriate language and expression
6. Formatting documents correctly and effectively
7. Executing a task as a member of a working group

Texts and other resources

Students are required to purchase the following course text:

Cunningham, Donald, Elizabeth O. Smith, and Thomas E. Pearsall. *How to Write for the World of Work*. Seventh Edition. Boston: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2005.

Other useful texts are:

Gerson, Sharon J. and Steven Gerson. *Technical Writing: Process and Product*. Fifth Edition. NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2006.

VanAlstyne, Judith. *Professional and Technical Writing Strategies: Communication in Technology and Science*. Sixth Edition. NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005.

Keller, Arnold. *The Practical Technical Writer: Planning and Producing Documents*. Ontario: Pearson/Longman, 2004.

Some recommended online sources are:

Online Technical Writing by David A. McMurray (Austin Community College)
at <http://www.io.com/~hcexres/textbook/acctoc.html>

Purdue University Online Writing Lab at

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/4/16/> (Professional, Technical Writing)

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/679/01/>

Virginia Tech University Writing Guidelines for Science and Engineering

Students at <http://www.writing.engr.psu.edu/>

This course is 100% coursework, comprising a series of writing assignments, using the writing process, culminating in a long report on a topic influenced by the students' particular disciplines. Specific pieces will be graded as follows:

Section A

Description (of a mechanism)	15 marks
Analysis (of a process)	20 marks
Proposal (oral presentation & written research)	25 marks

Section B

A long report and portfolio	40 marks
	<i>(16 individual, 24 group)</i>

Students must receive a pass in both Section A and Section B in order to pass the course.

OF TECHNICAL WRITING

Before teaching students about the specific skills used in the course, and its deliverables, it is important that we establish ground rules about the objectives of technical communication (writing for special purposes) and expectations of the business, professional or scientific context. Each of these components, listed below, is referenced in the required text (Pearsall et al) in the first chapters.

- The writing process
- Audience analysis
- Problem solving
- Ethics
- Teamwork

The following table provides a quick guide to the text reference and/or other resources that may be accessed for useful information for instructor guidance or for adaptation for lesson plans.

TABLE 1. Text References and Resources for Basic Technical Writing Principles

	Pearsall	Gerson	VanAlstyne	Keller	other
Writing process	Ch. 1, pp.9-21	Ch. 2, pp.26-46	Ch. 2, pp.37-50	--	http://www.io.com/~hcexres/textbook/process_over.html http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/1/
Audience analysis	Ch. 1, pp.6-8	Ch. 4, pp.86-96	Ch. 2, pp.29-36	Ch. 1, pp.5-7	http://www.io.com/~hcexres/textbook/aud.html http://www.writing.engr.psu.edu/workbooks/intro.html#audience https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/629/01/
Problem-solving	Ch. 14, pp.391-7 & Ch.18, pp.523-5	Ch. 1, p.18	--	Ch. 2, pp.24-26 Ch. 9, pp.208-10	--
Ethics	Ch. 1, pp.27-32	Ch. 3, pp.68-84	Ch. 1, pp.7-18	--	--
Team work	Ch. 1, pp.22-26	Ch. 1, pp.9-24	Ch. 2, pp.24-28	--	http://www.io.com/~hcexres/textbook/team.html

In fulfilling course objectives, students are required to use a variety of skills that would be applicable both in their current academic and future professional careers. The groundwork for success and productivity lies in mastery over basic, often overlooked, areas such as language, design and useful research. Our goals as instructors is to ensure that these fundamental aspects of writing are consistently emphasised as crucial to the successful completion of their assignments. While each assignment has its individual criteria to be met, these skills serve to underscore all of them. In this section of the handbook, the guidelines for instruction in the following skills will be detailed:

- Document design
- Use of illustration
- Secondary research methods
- Primary research methods
- Language
- Documentation
- Oral presentation
- Correspondence

Table 2 overleaf provides a quick guide to the text reference and/or other resources that may be accessed for useful information for instructor guidance or for adaptation for lesson plans.



Resources for Technical Writing Strategies

			Alstyne	Keller	other
Document design	Ch. 5, pp.97-129	Ch. 8, pp. 252-274	Ch. 4, pp.116-47	Ch. 5, pp.85-102	http://www.io.com/-hcexres/textbook/headings.html http://www.io.com/-hcexres/textbook/lists.html http://www.io.com/-hcexres/textbook/high.html http://www.io.com/-hcexres/textbook/page_design.html http://www.writing.engr.psu.edu/workbooks/intro.html#format https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/632/01/
Illustration	Ch. 6-7	Ch. 9, pp.275-304	Ch. 3, pp.72-113	Ch. 4, pp.56-81	http://www.io.com/-hcexres/textbook/graphics.html
Secondary research	Ch. 19 pp. 544-562	Ch. 14, pp.447-456	Ch. 5, pp.152-176	--	http://www.io.com/-hcexres/textbook/libris.html http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/553/1/ http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/552/1/
Primary research	Ch. 20, pp.564-83	--	Ch. 5, pp.177-192	--	http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/559/01/
Language	Ch. 4, pp.73-95	Ch. 3, pp.48-65; Ch. 4, pp.96-128	Ch. 2, pp.39-66	Ch. 3, pp.40-52	http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/648/01/ http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/644/01/ https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/652/01/ http://www.io.com/-hcexres/textbook/hirevov.html http://www.io.com/-hcexres/textbook/translating.html
Document -ation	Ch. 21, pp.585-606	Ch. 14, pp.456-465	Ch. 6, pp.196-230	--	http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/ http://www.io.com/-hcexres/textbook/docu.html
Oral presentation	Ch. 12, pp.332-355	Ch. 18, pp.597-631	Ch. 18, pp.624-631; Ch. 19	Ch. 14, pp.348-364	http://www.io.com/-hcexres/textbook/oral.html http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/686/01/
Correspondence	Ch. 8	Ch.5-6	Ch. 12, pp.374-421	Ch. 6, pp.104-127	http://www.io.com/-hcexres/textbook/genlett.html http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/653/01/

The deliverables for the course, where students will demonstrate and practice their aptitude with the skills and strategies of technical communication, are five assignments:

- Description (of a mechanism)
- Analysis (of a process)
- Proposal (of a research project)
- Annotated bibliography
- Report (research and problem-solving oriented)

Table 3 below provides references to text and/or other resources that may be accessed for instructor guidance or for adaptation into lesson plans.

TABLE 3. Text References and Resources for Technical Writing Applications

	Pearsall	Gerson	VanAlstyne	Keller	other
Description	Ch. 16, pp.444-483	Ch. 11, pp. 333-351	Ch. 8, pp.257-288	Ch. 10, pp.255-259; pp. 267-273	
Analysis/Process	--	--	Ch. 10, pp.311-339	Ch. 10, pp.261-3; pp. 273-5	
Proposal	Ch. 15, pp.415-442	Ch. 17, pp.540-541	Ch. 15, pp. 511-535	Ch. 8, pp.162-201	http://www.io.com/~hcexres/textbook/props.html http://www.writing.engr.psu.edu/workbooks/proposals.html
Annotated Biblio	Ch. 18, pp. 527-539	--	Ch. 5, pp.170-176	--	http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/
Report	Ch. 13-14	Ch. 16, pp.486-529	Ch. 15, pp.501-511	Ch. 9, pp. 203-251	http://www.io.com/~hcexres/textbook/feas.html http://www.io.com/~hcexres/textbook/otherep.html http://www.io.com/~hcexres/textbook/partsov.html http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/726/1/ http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/656/01/